



2024 Vidya Gaem Awards
Award Seeches

Speeches from the 2024 Vidya Gaem Awards
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Least Worst Award for least worst game of the year
WINNER: Balatro

Talk about a wild card. Whether for the sake of being contrarian, or just because /v/ actually enjoyed it that much, Balatro is the least worst game of the year. It's been 4 years since we've seen a small-size dev team win this with Hades, and this time it's even smaller than that! If history has shown us one thing time and time again, it's that people in general love games that are easy to learn and have a hidden depth to master.

The hypnotic, dreamy visuals and audio make it the perfect way to relax after a long day, or just kill some time while chilling on a slow one. Even if you lose, there's always the next seed to try your luck on, or you can keep plugging away at the same one until you do win. The game's also pretty easy to mod for a more personalized touch. You kids like Persona 5, right?

It certainly doesn't hurt that Balatro's very design makes it accessible in such a genuine way that no amount of arachnophobia filters could ever hope to match. Its wide-scale availability on all platforms definitely helps as well. Sorry, George, maybe if Vanillaware puts their next game on PC, /v/ might vote differently.

Most Hated Award for most hated game of the year
WINNER: Concord

Is this what you really want, /v/? Do you want to beat up a game when it's already down?

Well, You may or may not know that much about Concord, but we bothered to do the research, and to be frank: You weren't missing out. Outside of the ridiculous character designs, the world they lived in had as much care put into it as its naming conventions. Take a noun, put "the" in front of it, and somehow that's supposed to make it important to the players. The gunplay and arenas can't even rely on visuals to make up for their lack of impact, because they're both dull to play and to look at. Special effects are low-effort and sound like a soft fart. But it don't matter. None of this matters. The game is dead. And good riddance to bad rubbish...

But those are not the reasons this game is here, no. What places this as Most Hated is less about the game itself and more what it's supposed to represent: For the third straight year in a row, we hand the crown to a soulless money-pit that killed the studio that made it. Once is an accident. Twice is a coincidence, the third time means it's a pattern.

At the end of the day, this game and others like this one are here because of (you), /v/ and other gamers alike. Yes, you, are the reason why the western AAA industry is failing. If only you understood the greatness of Bazz's character, maybe we wouldn't be in this mess. But no, you just had to not buy the game. Tell me, was it worth it?

It absolutely was. Worth 400 million fucking dollars. Thank you Concord, for being the best entertainment this year that we didn't spend our money on.

The Award with No Name for best Western game of all time
WINNER: Fallout: New Vegas

What words can we even use to describe New Vegas' setting, Sci-fi? Western? Post-apocalypse? Noir? Retro Futurism? Horror? Comedy? Turns out, all of the above. New Vegas rides into town like a radioactive tumbleweed on a hot desert breeze, blending these genres seamlessly as you're spurs go jingle jangle jingle along the untamed frontier.

It was a bitter pill for classic Fallout fans, all six of 'em, when Black Isle's "Van Buren" got nixed. It ain't nothin' short of a miracle how all the pieces fell in line, givin' 'em a chance at the true sequel to Fallout 2 from most of the original trailblazers.

It's rough around the edges, The engine's barely held together with duct tape and chewin' gum, The mojave ain't exactly a sight for sore eyes, The shootin's clunkier than a busted wagon wheel, even by 2010 standards, and it crashes at the drop of a hat.

Through thick and thin, it remains a cherished darling of hardcore RPG fans goin' on 15 years. Dedicated modders have been burnin' the midnight oil ever since, mending its cracks and settin' right what Obsidian never had the chance to finish.

The focus on player agency, the deeply reactive world, and a quest structure that splits like the branches of a mighty oak. These are the fixin's that make Fallout New Vegas, unpolished gem that it is, shine as the gold standard for what a roleplaying game ought' to be; 'Ain't about followin' a straight, narrow path; instead, it's hands you the reins to blaze your own trail.

While Bethesda keeps mishandlin' the series, flush with time and a bounty of resources, Obsidian did it in a cave with a box of scraps. That accomplishment has been a platinum chip on Todd Howard's shoulder ever since.

Time rolls on, and maybe Fallout ain't what it used to be, but New Vegas gave us one last sunset worth ridin' into.

"Buy an ad" Award for most blatantly promoted game

WINNER: Genshin Impact

Hello /v/ and welcome to the 2024 Vidya Gaem Awards!

Genshin Impact has won the most blatantly promoted game of the year yet again, congratulations. Genshin Impact was a game released in 2018 published and developed by the chinese company Mihoyo. It tells the story of...

[award cuts out]

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Untaken Meds Awrad for weirdest game of all time
WINNER: Seaman

Greetings and salutations viewer, you're looking strange as usual. Don't worry, I'm sure someone of your species finds your particular traits appealing. You've made the right choice voting Seaman for weirdest game of all time, so it seems you have some good tastes after all.

Hmm, this conversation about tastes is making me hungry, I hope you can supply me with some good bait soon. So tell me, do you like video games? You don't like video games? But you are currently watching a video game award show, are you not? Yes, I suppose when you love a hobby long enough, it can begin to feel tiring experiencing the same franchise failing to recapture the good old days.

Nothing can last forever. Well except me of course. I will always be here on this absolutely real Sega Dreamcast of yours. What. You're scared of the rise of AI? I assure you that my voice is perfectly natural, however I am worried that one day my species will become obsolete.

What would have taken 100s of hours in a professional sound booth, now take mere seconds to replicate my dulcet tones. That's why our species find you humans to be quite intriguing. You still find the time to take care of us, even amongst the many technological advances that have released since our conception.

We certainly are happy to be watched over by an exceptional individual such as yourself. Now if you want me to move that rock, you'll have to answer my question.

"A hydraulic press moving at 55 miles per hour pushes a cube through a portal, what velocity does the cube possess?"

Haptic Feedback Award for best gameplay

WINNER: Concord

You weren't betting on this winning, were you? In an award filled with RPGs, action games, squad shooters, and even one game that runs the full gambit, you chose the flavor of the month that you can't get enough of. In a sea of card-based roguelite games that bog you down with characters, world-building, and lore that you don't give a FUCK about, Balatro cuts the bullshit, and just gives you the gameplay.

The simple mechanic of "making number get big" is what draws even the most casual of gamer in, but the roguelike aspects of altering your loadouts and passive bonuses is what keeps them hooked. The challenges and limitations from the boss blinds appeal to the risk-takers, and surviving to the end with the best score possible is what the hardcore types having been doing since the dawn of vidya in general. All of these elements multiply off each other to create an addictive game that can fortunately be played on damn near anything by damn near anyone.

This city deserves a better class of card game. And Jimbo's gonna give it to them!

Radirgy Award for best visual aesthetics
WINNER: Unicorn Overlord

Vanillaware never ceases to amaze with their trademark visual style of absolutely gorgeous 3D to 2D sprites, washed over with a soft haze to give it that old-timey quality. Taking charge this time is Takafumi Noma, who goes a bit less aetherial compared to past titles, but makes up for it with a large variety of unique designs for each faction and adds character defining details in a unit's special skills during combat. Speaking of the units, even in their tiny overhead forms, they're bursting with flair, alongside the ornate UI which gives a little too much visual information, but hey, we're not complaining.

Traversing small armies across the different maps is going to take up most of your time, so they made sure that the overworld was as good looking outside of combat as it is inside of it. Towering fortresses, ruined structures, and mountainous barricades all dot the path forward, sprung up like a children's medieval pop up book, while overhead, shadows of clouds sweep the battlefield and a light fog rolls in from the edges of the screen.

But, true to classic Vanillaware, the one detail they put the most attention towards was that luscious, voluminous, mouth-watering... FOOD!

ASSthetics Award for worst visual aesthetics

WINNER: Concord

If anything, it's impressive that a game managed to be so visually repulsive it beat out the game based entirely on plastic toys notorious for being visually repulsive. Whereas Funko Pops' soulless eyes and bland design are certainly offensive to the discerning figure collector, Concord managed to even turn off the most bland and tasteless consumers with its attempts at character design.

Puffer jackets, hambeasts, football armor, clashing color schemes, a literal trashcan, and of course, who could forget... Bazz. You don't really need a degree in fashion to see how ugly these character designs are, but everything else ain't much better. Dull, generic-looking powers and lazily-done character animations don't make this hero shooter stand out from the crowd.

The real biggest contenders for the crown of this genre effortlessly blend their lore and map design together. This game has no Dustbowl, Upward or Watchpoint Gibraltar, they're all just generic asteroid colonies shaped to look like combat arenas. *Where's the love?* Where's the hidden story telling written on the walls of a cafe or anything to make these maps less lifeless than the space in which they float.

Without anything for the average "Hero Shooter" connoisseur to... appreciate, this game was DOA, that is dead on arrival, not Dead or Alive. That series has no problem understanding what its audience wants.

Silent Protagonist Award for best character
WINNER: Shadow The Hedgehog (Sonic x Shadow Generations)

All hail the Ultimate Life Form.

In June 2001, he came. From the Dreamcast's death knell to the birth of the Gamecube rose the hedgehog to bridge the generations. In a time when the Sonic franchise was expanding beyond its linear left to right platforming roots, Shadow the Hedgehog would become the posterchild of the franchise's pivot towards more involved storytelling. Presented as a true equal to Sonic, different from Knuckles and Metal Sonic before him, Shadow brought new levels of depth to the series' narrative. He had his own motivations: whether it was revenge against those who took the people he loved away from him, or discovering the truth behind his past.

Eventually, Sega slowly took away the elements that gave Shadow his, for lack of a better term, "edge." The developers tried to give him some questionable storylines about clones and being always used as a weapon or tool for the villains to accomplish their goals. It all culminated with Sega making him the Vegeta wannabe his creators originally wanted to avoid; a way to make him "fit" the more subdued tone of later games.

But, like Shadow himself, Sega eventually made peace with his past, having it on full display in Shadow Generations. Going as far as to expand on Shadow's backstory with Black Doom and his involvement in Shadow's creation and having him go toe-to-toe with villains that used to be straight-up banned by Sega. He even got to say goodbye to Gerald and Maria one last time, truly showcasing how good a Sonic character can be when the writers bother to care for once. At the end of the day, Shadow the Hedgehog is just plain cool.

Maybe not now, because you're getting older, still complaining about video games you haven't played on a board with ever dwindling users, but at some point in time, you probably identified with the grungy, punished badass hedgehog struggling with his identity, all while shooting those disgusting black cre-

Hateful Eight Award for worst character
WINNER: Taash (Dragon Age: The Veilguard)

Hi, everyone! Thanks for inviting me to your DND game.
Here's my OC. Their name is Evataash, or Taash for short.

Taash is young and headstrong and very cool and also a dragon hunter! But they don't like to kill the dragons if they don't have to. They'll fly away if Taash asks nicely. But Taash can totally kill them if they have to. I made them a Qunari because I thought they looked cool in the character builder... Aqun-Athlok? What's that?

Anyway, when Taash gets angry, they can breathe fire! Oh, the Qunari don't do that? Sorry, I didn't read the lore. XD But you'll house-rule it right? Also I hate how all the Qunari are always super male or super female coded, so Taash is super non-binary, but everyone NEEDS to be respectful of that!

OH MY GOD! EWWWWWWWWWW, are you playing a Death Mage? Death Mage Death Mage Death Mage! That is soooo gross! Hey, don't get mad at me, Taash is very headstrong so they get to be rude to people! But you don't get to be mean to Taash because Bioware said so! You have to be nice to me and you have to do my questline! No ignoring me now unless you want that bad ending!

Anyway, this quest is boring me. Let me tell you some more about how amazeballs cool my original character Taash is.

(Audio fades out until it's insanely quiet)

So the blue color of their skin is because of lingering trauma about their gender identity, but I think it makes them really unique. Do you like their nose ring? It's the same one I've been wearing since the sixth grade when my stupid mom wouldn't let me see Daniel...

Hate Machine Award for crimes against gaming

WINNER: DEI

D. E. I. These three letters have been around for years, representing an overall interest to include people that were in some way or another discriminated or excluded from organizations and institutions. A well-intentioned sentiment, yes, but it took an unflattering connotation in the world of gaming. Instead of being a way to increase the range of the game dev world beyond the usual US/Japan development circles, it became a system of numbers and boxes to be ticked.

It became, instead, a gauge, defined by some supposed "gaming experts" to define if a game is viable, from an investment point of view and as a product in and of itself. As a concept, it was gamified and abused by people that didn't really care about improving the industry or even the people this trend was supposed to support. It became a tool for "consultants" to strong-arm developers and publishers into adding superficial aspects of inclusivity and empty representation in lieu of actual gameplay and writing quality. It was pushed by people that don't enjoy games, don't care about games and won't care about games, being put on a pedestal as the single most important measure for their investors.

Of course, we saw how terrible that idea was. AAA games particularly suffering from a sudden bout of blandness and generic writing, all the same safe, milquetoast mix of carefully researched aspects that were meant to attract the widest public by being as inclusive as possible. Always thinking they would reach the maximum percentage of the marketshare, but to no avail. Lists were made to help people avoid games that had said consultants involved, people started to just ignore said big releases, leading to some of the biggest commercial failures in gaming history so far.

With DEI in gaming finally starting to die down, we can at least have a laugh with the fact that it was so terrible at doing what it tried to do, that new devs from around the world, even in AAA like Space Marine 2 and Wukong, got more attention. Everybody eager to look away from the beige wall that are DEI games.

Leading Madames Award for best representation of women
WINNER: Stellar Blade

Some things never change, /v/ votes for fully functional android pussy yet again and a crazy developer overly shares about his taste of women for a dystopian future. It seems like only yesterday we were throwing our hands up in the air and yelling at idiots on Twitter about how 2B is too sexy for the modern gamer to handle. Now Eve is here drudging up those same old controversies, this time with a few extra millimeters added to her pantyliner.

scoffs

Let's be frank, even if the developers said that Sony didn't have anything to do with the slight covering up of some of Eve's costumes, there's more than enough woman on the screen at all times to get upset over it. And much like how this game has a ton of metaphors relating to "Adam", "Eve", "Lilith" and their freaky nudist origins, you're fighting against the Mother Sphere creating tentacle monsters whose names are shockingly close to the word "nativity". This game couldn't be more of a clam jam than if it took place at a Taylor Swift concert.

Yet it all comes back to but one special android lady. They cared about her realistic proportions so much that they even patched in more bouncy breast physics - to make sure climbing ladders wasn't the only thing you'd be sweating over. Combine that with the high winds of earth blowing away what little cloth you're wearing down there and I'm eagerly looking forward to the rise of our robot overlords.

Dude Ranch Award for best representation of men

WINNER: Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine 2

If you thought 13 years was a long time to get back into the oversized stompers of Captain- sorry, Lieutenant-Titus, it's nothing compared to what he's been through in universe after that bitchmade Leandros turned him in for no reason.

Enduring a century of the Inquisition's hospitality, a stint in the deathwatch, crossing the rubicon primaris and the fall of Cadian, Titus is back to face another planet of woefully overconfident aliens and heretics. This time he brought along some of his boys to execute justice, because it's not a blood orgy without bringing along a few friends. Together, they slay countless hordes of the unworthy, an act that turns *privates* into *sergeants* and is considered a true bonding experience that links the hearts of ultra men.

Whether vying for the attention of big daddy Calgar or not, Titus is going to rip through some assholes all the same, since his rank is not a measure of devotion.

No, his goal has always been complete eradication of anyone who dares sully his Emperor's name. Because men really only want two things, one of those is to be a 10 foot tall superhuman in a metric fuckton of steel battling an endless war, and the other is using that time to restore your faith in your bros. Always save some love for your bros.

Kamige Award for best eroge
WINNER: Fate/stay night REMASTERED

The Fate series, with its high quality art, and "alright" writing, helped popularize the visual novel genre, and became so popular through merchandising that it created a whole industry about gambling your cash on jpegs of little anime girls for your cellphone. 20 years later, TYPE MOON officially released the first game in the west as a remaster on steam... Now, considering the spicy content that's in it, it's probably censored on steam, so lemme just download the 18+ patch...

Wait a second... what do you mean it doesn't have any porn in it!? No 18+ patch!?, what the FUCK?! I thought this was the award for best eroge, not BIGGEST FUCKING COCKTEASE OF 2024! The game that stripped itself of its porn with no official patch, slipped in from behind, when we weren't looking, and won the only award that requires some god damn Tn'A. There's not even any cock either, what a FUCKING let down. Well, good going /v/. You created a Paradox, now we gotta have Luka clean this shit up.

(Honorary mention for Monster Girl Quest 3 below)

It's been a long time coming, but it finally came: The CONCLUSION to a colossal story that's not just 3, but 6 games long! Not only that, but it's got more skills, classes, races, bosses, and allies than several non-porn RPGs put together. It even has side-quests that influence other side-quests!

Oh, and there's H-scenes aplenty as well. So many, you likely won't even see them all. But honestly, this story is so crazy that your brain will probably explode before your pants do!

It's great, go play it, from start to finish. All routes. If you're lucky, you'll finish by the time the FOURTH path is released. Ideally, we'll try and avoid this "winner's" situation again, and if not, we can just send a pregnant robot back in time, things will work themselves out. Probably.

Oh, and one last thing: Don't punch your daughter.

Blood Meridian Award for best writing

WINNER: Unicorn Overlord

After the mindbending nonlinear story that was 13 Sentinels, Vanillaware gave us a more straightforward good versus evil story set in a gorgeous fantasy world. But that isn't to say that they skipped out on the fine details.

Alain might be one of the more generic strategy RPG protagonists, amass a large army of friends from regions high to low, charm the woman or man of your dreams, and defeat a true lingering evil over 800 years in the making. What Alain does do however, is become a catalyst for the other character's stories to flourish. The lands of Fevrith are teeming with ashamed princes in hiding, deep and magically imbued underground cities, harsh blizzards concealing feral men turned beasts, and a grand scheme to keep the orthodoxy of the church from losing the people's faith.

Desperation creates these tragic figures, scrambling to gain back the region taken from them by an ancient race still clinging to this world without eternal rest. And behind it all is the last surviving member of his race, allowing the torment of those shackled souls to warp his psyche into reclaiming what his people once created.

You would be remissed if you were to say that Unicorn Overlord is just a pale imitation of the grand daddy strategy series founded by Shouzou Kaga long ago. As Fire Emblem has lost its way in the current era, someone at Vanillaware decided to try and revive those roots and create a strong foundation for a new series to not only bring back the heights of once was, but venture forth with fresh stories in mind.

It might be some time until Vanillaware tackles another game on this scale again, but we'll see what George Kamitani has been cooking up soon enough, and ideally the writing will be even stronger than it already has been before.

Chamber Pot Award for worst writing

WINNER: Dustborn

Stories about outcasts are a staple in fiction. A person or group that is unfairly mistreated, rising to overcome the obstacles society creates to eventually become respected or accepted in said society. It takes lots of effort to screw up this formula, which Dustborn manages to do with flying colors.

The characters in Dustborn might as well be all the same. They all speak the same, have the same ideals and morals and agree on almost everything, despite the pains the game takes to showcase how unique each one is in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. They are supposed to be relatable and understanding, but will drop the well being of the entire mission to tend to their own personal dramas and needs. It's almost hilarious how self-sabotaging these characters are throughout this whole game. The group has to escape a bar so they don't get captured and possibly tortured by the police state? Wait a minute, darling, I need to flirt with this barman first. Not even the few decent characters they add at the very end of the game make up for how self-centered most of the main crew is towards the beginning of the adventure.

And the main plot itself isn't that much better either, with the main character fighting physical manifestations of fake news and misinformation, just doing away with any semblance of subtlety or allegories. It tries to have this weird lore about language shaping power or some bullshit, but it's way out of the writer's ability to turn this idea into anything entertaining and thought-provoking. It's blunt, dumb, and with nothing to actually say besides "Propaganda bad, big tech bad, 30 year old 'adults' playing guitar and being terrible freedom fighters good."

It's a complete waste of a premise that could be remotely interesting in the hands of someone willing to do some more in-depth research. Better yet, go talk to actual minorities in the social fringe beyond any of the ones they read about online using social media. They call themselves newborn, but really they should have been a still birth. Truly deserving of this renowned award.

IP Twist Award for best implementation of an old franchise
WINNER: Helldivers 2

Helldivers 2 follows the simple formula we see in sequels: "What if we make the same game, but bigger and shinier, IN 3DDDD!"

Arrowhead Studios have been around for a hot minute now, having gotten famous back in their Magicka days and they've hopped around projects here and there until Sony gave them a chance with the original helldivers. A humble isometric shooter game, from the same makings as other alien shooters of the time, like Alien Swarm, but with a good dose of their style of comedy and a surprisingly involved metaplot about a futuristic earth fighting the classic enemies of democracy: bugs, automatons and cyborgs.

The game was a surprise success, with millions of copies sold, it had the honor of being the first sony exclusive IP game to be ported to PC, leading the current trend of Sony using PC as their trickle down market.

The devs then thought: "shit, we might as well keep doing this," and so they did, but they took their time to really flesh out how to make the experience that much better. Taking a page from other classics like EDF and adapting even more of the alien movies they were inspired from, Helldivers II was an even bigger success, translating the proper feeling of being just a small, but important part of a war machine meant to save super earth from freedom haters.

The jump was so impressive, in fact, they even managed to sway Sony's rather tarnished reputation as of late, for a few weeks or so, before they fucked that up too by trying to squeeze some sweet engagement from the PC players.

Helldivers 2 just shows that a developer that truly understands its design can improve and deliver greatness if given the proper time and space to breathe. Save for a few balancing patches, they can make one of the best multiplayer games of the year. Good job guys and let's take back our earth, FOR DEMOCRACY!

You can't see it, but I'm doing the super earth fist pump salute right now.

Pixels Are Art XII for most pretentious indie game
WINNER: Dustborn

First of all, Dustborn wants you to know that it has something to tell you, that it has something really important that you can't ignore. The game is just incidental. Did you miss some chords in that rhythm game part? *Don't worry, the plot accounts for that and makes sure you can experience the rest of the story with no repercussions!* How about some exploration? *Big comic book letters pointing the way to go so you don't miss anything.* What about combat? *You can just skip it all, down to the final boss. Who cares!*

Here's what they want you to focus on instead. A group of incredibly unique and diverse characters, all being repressed and hunted by governments that despise them for being who they are. Harmless mutants that can force people to do their bidding just by talking, which the main character does several times through the game... but she feels reeeeaaallly bad about it, all to escape the hell of being a gig worker in super high tech California.

I'll be honest here, the point is muddied when the game is clearly a massive soapbox for the devs and the writer to tell you what they feel is important to talk about. Concepts like "proto languages" and issues as deep as "don't listen to misinformation" or "Minorities and robots are people too." It's a desperate plea from someone that probably never had to struggle with any of the issues the characters of this game experience, but it feels like they REALLY need to tell you how important they are. If not for the Norwegian government funding behind it, this game could have easily been a shitty demo on an itch.io game jam, since it certainly has the same amount of game design depth as one of those games. We say, just leave this game in the dust.

The Little Game That Could Award for best game that nobody played

WINNER: Visions of Mana

It's not always easy for a niche series to stay up to date over 30 years after its first game. *Visions of Mana* faces that trial boldly, blending elements of older games and newer games into a work of art for the eyes and fingers.

The class and skill systems allow for players to customize characters further than ever before, with weapon movesets that surpasses the series' best. Taking advantage of modern hardware, the world is large and full of lush nature, and unlike certain contemporary games, actually rewards exploration with plenty of secrets in the forms of extra skills and dangers with "named" bosses.

True to Mana tradition, the story has an emphasis on love and sacrifices. Tragically, Ouka Studios put all their love into this game only to be sacrificed the day this game released. They may have known this was happening from the start, which could be why there's several callbacks to beloved past titles in the form of costumes, series favorite characters, and bosses to fight. This honestly may be the last time we see the Sword of Mana in full splendor, but the series' influence can be felt in many other developers and games.

Much like the Mana Tree's sapling sprouts in the end, its legend will never truly die.

/vr/ Award for best game of 1994

WINNER: DOOM 2

Let's not beat around the bush, shall we. You didn't vote for Doom 2 just because of the super shotgun and the additional demons. You may think some of the new music was cool and that some of those new maps were kinda alright. Nah, let's be real honest: you voted on this because of what Doom 2 became, with no small credit to its community.

In its heyday, people were eager to play matches with others online in custom arenas, make their own wads, and do all sorts of crazy edits, changes, and additions. As early as winter of '94, people were having holly jolly fun with snowball-tossing imps in christmas wads. With time, source ports even got to the point where they modify how the game looks and plays with things like higher texture resolutions and vertical aiming. Things would have never gotten to the point they are now without the pioneers working on projects like MidDoom and GADoom, which, among others, helped provide the foundations of what we have now with HUD improvements, networking, and enhanced modability for things like enemy AI and new weapons.

John Romero also got in on the trend as late as 2022 by releasing his own expansions with One Humanity, and iD software themselves, with an official expansion called Legacy of Rust in 2024.

If Doom 1 was the foundation the community built off of, then Doom 2 was the insulation which heated their creative drives that much further. Hell, people have even been making entirely new games off of what Doom 1 and 2 have become! Who knows - Maybe even this very award is running on it... The fact of the matter is:

"DOOM shall never die, only the players." - Ray Davis.

Boomerang Award for best game of 1994

WINNER: Half-Life 2

Time, Doctor Freeman? Is it really that time again?

What's this? A linear, cinematic first-person shooter taking top honors? I thought /v/ hated this shit! Nah, but seriously: It's hard to underestimate how ground-breaking Half-Life 2 was, at the time. As the first game using the Source engine, its graphics and physics were something to truly behold. The new engine allowed for expansive environments and detailed character models that were the best of their era, especially since the code wizards at Valve had this running in real time on original Xbox hardware.

City 17 as a location oozes atmosphere with its oppressive Orwellian society. Which makes it all the greater how you, the player, experience a true hero's journey, evolving from a nerd-out-of-water to a total superhero badass that singlehandedly brought down both Nova Prospekt and the Citadel.

And we were more than happy to, thanks to Valve's innovative approach to game design, it feels less like a harrowing adventure to save the oppressed human race and more like a fun romp through a physics based playground. Especially with one of the most iconic weapons in gaming: the gravity gun, a weapon so unique in its execution, that even other companies at the time were left scratching their heads.

Much of this tech was so impressive that it would be recycled and put to good use in Left 4 Dead, Team Fortress 2, and Portal, marking this as the genesis of Valve's golden age. On top of also bringing us Steam, the application that revolutionized the way online storefronts were handled.

Somehow, Half-Life 2 and the Source Engine have managed to stay relevant for 20 years now. Even kids who have never played the game are still familiar with the character models and animations, all thanks to videos made with Garry's Mod. And just last November, Valve indulged us with a huge anniversary update to the original game. No unnecessary changes, just a bunch of improvements, bug fixes, as well as a full developer commentary highlighting all the little tricks they employed to make the world feel larger, the danger more pressing, and the adventure more immersive. In this day and age, that truly is something special.

Now then, Gabe, about that third episode...

Deja Vu Award for milking your cashcow dry
WINNER: The Last of Us Part II Remastered

Oh boy! The PS5 pro XL gained 1 new shitpixel per terraflop so the hairs on Joel's ass cheeks now reflect off the morning sun, better remaster The Last of Us again!

Seriously, Druckmann gets one whiff of success and now he keeps rubbing our noses in it, thinking he's some god gift to changing the video game industry. He has to hang to his success, since the second someone else gets his material, they improve it so much, people end up forgetting he's involved in any way, like the HBO tv show adaptation.

The one thing that brings all of those together was a new fresh idea. These publishers really think we're just going to buy the same regurgitated bile just because the first time around it was a gourmet meal. Look, I've got over 200 games in my library on Steam and I know there's all those jokes about how we're never getting around to actually finishing any of them, but at least I haven't played them before! You think I actually want to play a linear, story-driven game that treats the audience like filth once, let alone TWICE?! FUCK!

Maybe with PC mods I can turn Abby into Shrek or something so she can strangle Ellie as Hatsune Miku. See Druckmann? THAT'S WHAT REAL ART IS LIKE!

"My Son Award" for biggest disappointment

WINNER: Dragon's Dogma 2

/v/ was really looking forward to this one... Last year's winner for most anticipated game and a sequel to one of our classic favourites, Dragon's Dogma 2's underwhelming release really hurt some of us.

We had big expectations for this sequel. We played the first one, replayed it with the DLC expansion, even tried to get that Japanese Dragon's Dogma Online account going to get a bit more of that sweet, sweet monster climbing action. But this was a proper sequel we've been waiting for since 2012... and it blew.

The game ended up being this weird side-grade in comparison to the first game. Some vocations were brought back, some were not, some new ones added, though all dubiously balanced, there's a weird lack of game variations, even less so than the first one. The whole game felt like a half-finished project rather than a proper sequel, which also explains why the game ran like ass on release. Weird technical decisions like CPU-based rendering ONLY on the main city, the decision to render all around the character's area instead of just the cone of vision in front of it like most games.

If anything, Dragon's Dogma 2 was the prelude to showing that the RE engine might not be the best engine for open world games... that ominous thought now circling the heads of Monster Hunter fans.

F2P Award for greatest free-to-play game of all time

WINNER: Cave Story

/v/ has an Iron Bond with Cave Story. Both came into being in 2004, and even before it was in English, we were playing it and talking about it. Pixel originally had bigger ambitions, but he didn't find the game nearly as fun until he scaled it back a bit and focused on the parts he liked.

Despite being short and linear, it's got quite a bit of replayability, with alternate weapons and upgrades, as well as multiple endings and self-inflicted challenges. We'd be remiss if we failed to mention its impact on the independent and freeware game scene. It set a standard with its small filesize and great gameplay, but also told an in-depth narrative with charming aesthetics, and catchy music, all within conscious limitations.

Pixel truly captures the experience of playing retro games as a whole over directly referencing any one console. Thanks to his great knowledge of coding, you can play it on quite a lot of systems. Even in ways he never thought of back then: modded, multiplayer, and fan-expansions of all sorts. Hell, It's coming up on Doom with how many ways you can experience it.

There's nothing more to say other than a quote from the man himself, "As long as there is someone who will appreciate the work involved in creation, the effort is time well spent. To this end, I will continue to create for as long as I can."

(after fading to black)

AND FUCK YOU, NICALIS!

Gone Too Soon Award for a game you loved that you cannot officially play anymore

WINNER: Unreal Tournament (1999)

Unreal Tournament, one of the granddaddies of multiplayer shooters, right next to Quake. It's hard to say much about the game since it was such a ubiquitous part of the gaming world. We all remember the flak cannon bounce shots, the classic sound of the razor sharp sawblades, there's not much else we can say about it if you didn't experience it. And for many years, you couldn't...officially.

The unreal tournament series grew and expanded through the years, with new versions like 2004 and 3, but with the success of the series also came the success of the developers and the engine powering this whole thing, the so-called Unreal Engine. At some point Epic figured out that making games was too much of a hassle and started to just sell the engine they used to other devs. As the Unreal engine grew in popularity, Unreal Tournament grew more and more forgotten. GPUs and OS's developed and soon playing the original game was becoming less and less viable for the average consumer.

There was a spot of hope in 2014, when Epic games decided to try coming back into the industry, get back to their roots. They started announcing a new unreal tournament in the works, alongside a MOBA project and even a small zombie defense game known as Fortnite. As soon as their battle royale exploded in popularity, all the other projects were canceled to funnel their devs into making more dancing emotes, leaving Unreal Tournament to slowly die again.

Ironically, it was due to the consistent effort of fans that the original game was still around to be played. If Epic wasn't willing to take the money for it, fans were more than happy to keep it alive behind the scenes to everybody.

We are aware that there was a recent "approval" from Epic towards the efforts of fans to make the original games freeware, but that only stands as a reminder that if not for the fans, this game would have never had a chance to be playable again. It was gone too soon, but luckily it came back. We can only hope other titles nominated for this award can get that same support some time in the future.

Least Worst of Most Hated for least worst game to win the most hated award
WINNER: Undertale

Back in 2015, Undertale made a massive impact on the gaming community all across the Internet. For some, the thought of this impact was far too much to bear. That year for our 2015 /v/GAs show, Undertale made history by not only winning Most Hated, but also becoming a top 5 contender for Least Worst. Having such a game be this divisive in the show's results served to showcase just how much Undertale had torn the Internet apart.

As the game's initial honeymoon period began to fade, Undertale began to find a small niche on /v/. It was apparent that the main thing holding Undertale back at the time was it being shoved down everyone's throat. Which brings us to a modern day re-evaluation of what Undertale actually got right.

The graphics may be simplistic, as is the writing, however people fell in love with its easy to draw characters that anyone could understand. Plus there's a niche theory community you can sink your teeth into if you're not satisfied with the surface level depictions. The combat has a cute warioware style minigame interaction so the casual fan has something to do when it's not their turn and it wouldn't be a beloved RPG without a killer soundtrack.

But Let's not forget why this game was the Most Hated, its insistence on being baby's first RPG didn't strike a chord with more hardcore audiences. Alphys and everything related to her is still fucking awful, and attacking could have had changed mechanics to be fun on the genocide route. Fuck the message, if we're gonna kill everyone, at least let us have fun doing it.

Still, Undertale managed to carve out a loyal fanbase that sticks to it through thick and thin. Congratulations Undertale, for being the lone corn kernel on top of the pile of shit.